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SUBJECT: TAWAFUQ WITHDRAWS LIST OF NOMINEES

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Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On May 29, Tawafuq Spokesman Salim Jibouri described to PolOffs the rationale behind the Tawafuq bloc's May 27 statement withdrawing its slate of ministerial nominees. Salim highlighted the frustration of Tawafuq members with PM Maliki's pattern of raising new objections to the nominees each time he sits down with Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi. In Tawafuq's view, this pattern calls into question Maliki's seriousness about bringing Tawafuq back into the cabinet.

¶2. (C) When asked about the PM's proposal to keep Planning Minister Ali Baban in place for a few more months before replacing him with a Tawafuq nominee, Salim doubted whether Maliki would keep his word. Nevertheless, he said Tawafuq could accept such a compromise if the U.S. would guarantee that Maliki will deliver his part of the bargain. Jibouri added that the decision to withdraw Tawafuq's list of nominees was coordinated with Hashimi, who is traveling in Jordan. The next step will be for Hashimi and Maliki to have a frank discussion when they each return to Iraq, after which Tawafuq will re-evaluate Maliki's seriousness about reaching an agreement.

¶3. (C) Comment: We expect the negotiations between Maliki and Hashimi will pick up where they left off once both return from travel outside the country. The protracted talks over Tawafuq's return have been difficult, but sources close to both Maliki and Hashimi say they have been negotiating in good faith and without the personal rancor that impeded cooperation in the past. End Comment.  
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